

Consumption

Continuing the upward trend that began in 1991, total natural gas consumption rose during 1996, reaching 22.0 trillion cubic feet. This level is 2 percent higher than in 1995 and among the highest annual levels ever recorded. Natural gas has accounted for 25 percent of total energy consumption in the United States since 1992, and this share was maintained in 1996.

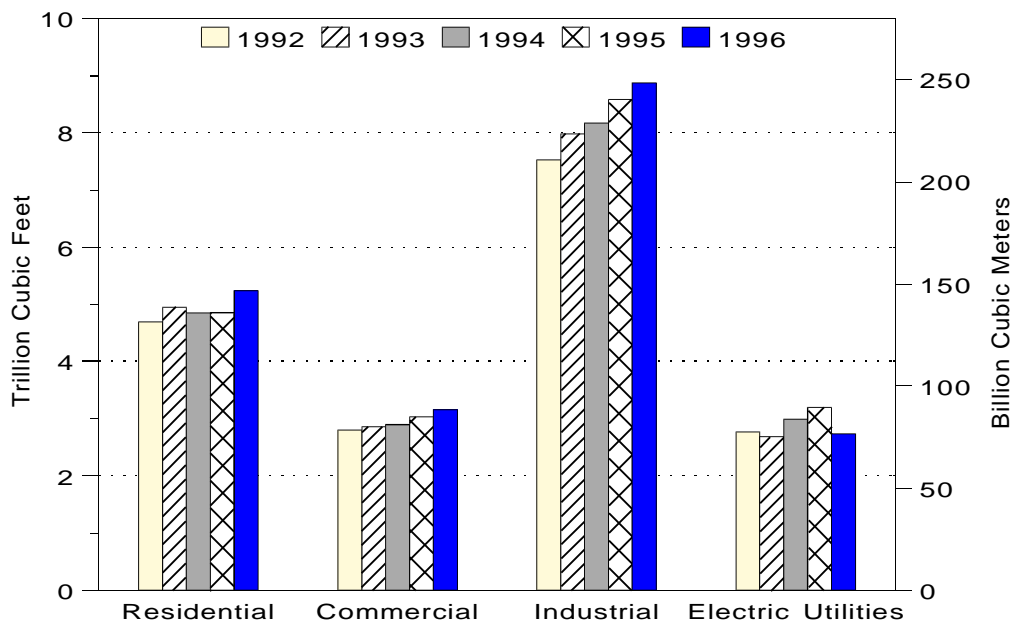
Although electric utility consumption declined, deliveries to residential, commercial, and industrial consumers each set new records in 1996. In the residential and industrial sectors the prior record levels were attained in the early 1970's. In the face of rising prices and increased demand from the residential and commercial sectors, consumption by electric utilities declined 15 percent in 1996. Deliveries of gas to industrial consumers, which include deliveries to cogenerators, represented 44 percent of total deliveries to natural gas consumers.

Consumption in the residential and commercial sectors was driven primarily by weather-related demand. Weather differences between 1996 and the previous year were strong during the first four months, especially in March. According to heating degree day data, during 1996 the Nation was on average 14 percent colder than normal and March 1996 was 27 percent colder than March 1995. In fact, many parts of the country were from 30 to 60 percent colder in March 1996 than in the same month one year ago.

Residential and Commercial

Many States reported record low temperatures in early 1996 following the generally moderate weather recorded in 1995. In the residential and commercial sectors consumption is driven mostly by weather-related space-heating requirements. The cumulative effect of the much colder weather

Figure 10. Natural Gas Delivered to Consumers in the United States, 1992-1996



Note: In 1996, consumption of natural gas for agricultural use is classified as industrial use. In 1995 and earlier years, agricultural use was classified as commercial use.
Source: Energy Information Administration (EIA), Form EIA-176, "Annual Report of Natural and Supplemental Gas Supply and Disposition", and Form EIA-759, "Monthly Power Plant Report."